



THUNDER NEWS

FOB Duke
3-16 FA / G204
JANUARY 2006



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From The Battalion Commander:

First, I want to thank you all for the outpouring of support and prayers in what has been a tough few days for our battalion, for our leaders and for five families of our Soldiers who were killed Jan. 5 here in Iraq. The five men killed on that day were all tremendous fathers, sons, brothers, husbands and warriors. They were tough, disciplined and dedicated men who took their oath of office as a Soldier seriously and without reservation. Please continue to keep these Soldiers and their families in your prayers. They were all loved and appreciated deeply in the profession of arms. We will continue to be very focused here, our desire for victory runs deep and our resolve is strong. We will continue to execute our mission through these great men.

The Battalion continues to remain as busy as ever since we have arrived here at FOB DUKE in the AN NAJAF province. Our primary focus remains developing Iraqi Security Forces in our Area of Operations so that they become self-sufficient. We have a tremendous relationship with our Iraqi partnership battalion. Our military transition team, led by MAJ Tim Knowles and the rest of the MITT team has developed a great working relationship with our IA battalion partners. Based on our losses sustained Jan. 5, CPT Steven Miller will assume the duties of the HHB Commander. CPT Pablo Diaz will assume command of Bulldog Battery. These changes of command will take place Jan. 22 here at FOB DUKE. In the beginning days of January, we executed a combined operation with our Iraqi partners to locate and destroy caches of enemy ammunition and explosives in our area. The operation was tremendously

successful and netted the destruction of hundreds of artillery and mortar rounds as well as rockets. The operation, led by our Iraqi partners and assisted by A Battery, was a great first step towards what will be a productive year of combined security operations in our area of operations. Bravo Battery has focused its attention on a Police Partnership Program in Najaf and supporting our governmental and economic improvement program in the province. As they work to bridge our working relationship



The 3-16 FA Colors stand tall at FOB Duke

with the local police, we await the arrival of a dedicated Military Police company to assist us in our effort. They will provide a tremendous amount of expertise in this area.

Our mechanics and logistics folks are working extremely hard in keeping our equipment running as well as helping to make our living and working conditions better each day. It takes a tremendous amount of work to keep our vehicles rolling in these tough desert conditions and our mechanics are simply the best.

Our great troopers in our Golf Forward Support Company are providing first-rate support at every turn.

Since Feb. 1 we have begun our Rest and Recuperation (R&R) Leave program. Soldiers and families can anticipate a 21-day time frame from departure at our FOB and then return back to the FOB. In other words, if a Soldier departs FOB Duke for leave Feb. 1, he will be expected to be back on FOB Duke after his/her leave around the 22nd of Feb. The R&R program is expected to run from Feb. 1 until Sept. 30. Once a Soldier departs theater (Kuwait City International Airport), he/she will arrive at one of three gateway airports; Frankfurt, Germany, Atlanta International or Dallas-Fort Worth International. Soldiers will disembark at one of these three gateways depending on their final destination. At one of the three gateways, each Soldier will receive a round-trip ticket at government expense, to the commercial airport nearest their approved R&R leave destination. Rental cars, buses, trains, private aircraft or any other mode of transportation will not be funded or reimbursed by the government. A Soldier's 15-day leave begins when they reach one of the three approved gateways and ends when they return back to that gateway in order to return to Kuwait City International Airport. If you have any questions about R&R leave, contact your FRG leader.

Again, from CSM Ed Trentzsch and me, we want to thank you for your tremendous support during the past month. Please continue to keep us in your hearts and prayers and know that the Thunder leaders are taking care of your special Soldier. We love and miss you all very much. **THUNDER PRIDE!**
LTC Mike Hilliard
Thunder 6

Hardrock's Headlines: This has been a difficult month for all of the Soldiers of 3-16 and particularly for those of HHB. As many of you now know 3-16 and Hardrock suffered the loss of five of its best earlier in January. MAJ William Hecker, CPT Christopher Petty, SFC Stephen White, SGT Johnny Peralez and PVT Robbie Mariano were all loved by their comrades, are sorely missed and will never be forgotten.

Hardrock Soldiers continue to impress all those they encounter. In spite of a very hard month, the daily routine is beginning to take shape; after the last elements of 1-198 departed the Soldiers of HHB took over.

Schedules and shifts have been published; timelines and battle rhythms are being refined. Commo has been burning the midnight oil making sure we have the ability to communicate across our AO. Medics continue to provide the best medical support for both the firing batteries and the FOB Duke Aid Station. Radar and Metro are all doing well in Kalsu and FOB Liberty. The scout platoon, under the watchful eye of SSG Alvarez, has transformed from 16 Soldiers with different MOS's into a well trained and disciplined platoon who could match skills with the best the Infantry has to offer. We all miss you very much and look forward to our home coming. Keep the dinner warm and the beer cold, we will be home soon.

1LT Brian Covert HHB Commander

Automatic's Announcements: Greetings from FOB Duke Iraq. Now that we are all settled in Iraq things are starting to fall into place. We've spent time getting our Soldiers settled into their permanent living areas and getting used to the battle rhythm of FOB Duke.

We have taken the responsibility

of patrolling the city of An Najaf and numerous nearby cities, which have been divided up among our platoons. We stay very busy in Alpha Battery, patrolling usually twice a day, cleaning our weapons, and keeping our trucks running are all full-time jobs. However, we still find time to do PT, watch a movie occasionally, and play a video game or two. Our Soldiers make me proud every day to serve next to them. We are now beginning to work with the Iraqi army and Iraqi police; this is proving to be a useful and educational partnership. Every day we're learning more about the Iraqi people and their culture. This will aid us in our mission to train a competent and stable Iraqi army. We will continue to look out for one another to make sure each and every one of us is on our way home as soon as possible.

1SG Batts and I are doing everything we can to make sure everyone has what they need to succeed in their mission. I know the family members at home are going through an equally tough time. It is important that you use the family readiness group to lean on each other for comfort, information and support. Thanks for supporting your Soldier. Your support helps the Soldier go out the gate with a clear mind that is focused on the mission and come home safe.

CPT Rick Showalter Automatics Commander

Bulldog's Biz: It has been a rough couple of weeks for Thunder family. However, we are still driving on. Our prayers go out to the Hardrock Battery and all the families of the bereaved. All Bulldog Soldiers are now where they are going in Iraq. We have some of the battery at FOB Kalsu and the rest of us are at FOB Duke. The mail service seems to be rather efficient. Soldiers are getting letters and packages in as little as ten days. Keep sending the packages!

Our battery mission is great. We are all working towards a better Iraq. We have a platoon working on civil affairs

projects (water, electricity, schools, etc...), a platoon working with the Iraqi police, a platoon prepared to respond to any emergency, and a platoon prepared to shoot artillery. Special thanks and recognition to a few great Soldiers. SGT Crow Flies High stayed in Kuwait a few extra days tying up all loose ends and ensuring that everything was cleared there so the rest of the battery can get into Iraq and get to work. On the other hand, CPL Rodriguez came to Iraq several days before the rest of us in order to receive the battery as we arrived. His work has paid huge dividends in getting us prepared for success here. SGT Harrell and SGT Martinez reenlisted Jan. 1. Thanks for their continued service to our Army. Also, CPL Orta, CPL Osborne, CPL Felix, PFC George, PFC Garrison, and PFC Barrientos all were promoted to the next rank the same day. Congratulations to them!

CPT Steven Miller Bulldog Commander

Gladiator's Guide: Happy New Year! We have all arrived to Iraq and are settled in to our new living areas. Our camp here is quite comfortable for the most part. We are fed well, and have a nice little weight room along with a Moral Welfare and Recreation (MWR) tent that contains ping-pong, video games and televisions. We also have two internet centers and AT&T payphone services available to keep in touch with our friends and family. Several Gladiators have advanced to the next rank in January. Congratulations to the following Soldiers: SGT Manfre, SGT Lieva, SPC Shaw, SPC Bowers, PFC Porras, PFC Robinson, PFC Cloutier and PFC Fedoruk. The company has multiple missions on FOB Duke and in the city of Najaf. Golf Company is not just the "Maintenance unit"...

We are providing security at the Entry Control Point (ECP). These Soldiers' main mission is to protect the FOB. They are doing an outstanding job.

Every month I will highlight every platoon. 2LT Inglin is the OIC of managing the interpreters that work at the gate. SFC Torres, the NCOIC, monitors the construction and overall assessment of the Entry Control Point. Our Sergeants of the Guard are SSG Sanders and SSG Thomas. Their primary mission is to handle the surveillance and monitor the incoming

and outgoing traffic that leaves the FOB. These are great Soldiers that work at the ECP. As a commander, I could not ask for a "greater group" of Americans than the ones that are assigned to Golf Company. I know that all of you are proud of these Soldiers.

On Jan. 5 the Hardrock Battery lost five "great Americans". Please pray for the families of the fallen. We understand our mission over here in Iraq. As a company we accomplish that mission. Again Happy New years!!!!

CPT Michael Buck
Golf Company Commander



Miller's Mafia



Congratulations to SGT Thuma & SGT Manfre on promotion.

REUPS

To all the Soldiers who have re-enlisted,
thanks for serving our great nation

Alpha Battery:

PFC Keaton

PFC Garcia

SPC Mauro

SPC Martinez

Bravo Battery:

SGT Harrell

SGT Martinez



Battalion Re-enlistment Ceremony

THUNDER BIRTHDAYS

February

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 2 SPC Alzawhari (HHB) | 13 SGT Krystofiak (GOLF) |
| 2 1LT Umar (HHB) | 14 SPC Crawford (B) |
| 3 PV2 Mendoza (GOLF) | 16 SSG Thomas (GOLF) |
| 4 SPC Robinson (B) | 17 2LT Hamilton (B) |
| 4 SSG Galvin (HHB) | 18 PFC Clair (HHB) |
| 4 1LT Clare (A) | 19 SPC Vang (GOLF) |
| 6 SGT Baker (GOLF) | 20 SPC Holder (HHB) |
| 8 SPC Harper (A) | 20 SSG Roy (A) |
| 9 SPC Seithel (B) | 21 SGT Cordova (A) |
| 9 SPC Vanzandt (GOLF) | 22 SPC Gonzales (A) |
| 10 PV2 Woods (GOLF) | 24 SFC Koester (A) |
| 10 PFC Hobbs (A) | 26 SSG Alvarez (A) |
| 10 SSG Sanders (GOLF) | 28 PVT McGuire (B) |
| 11 PFC Lehman (B) | 28 PFC Eilerman (A) |
| 11 SPC Viehland (HHB) | 28 1SG Sousa (GOLF) |
| 11 CPL Rodriguez (B) | 29 PFC Branch (GOLF) |
| 12 SGT Speegle (GOLF) | |



Even Santa Claus comes to Iraq.



Christmas Dinner at FOB Duke

Five Great Americans



MAJ William Hecker



SFC Steven White



CPT Christopher Petty



SGT Johnny Peralez, Jr.

*"O beautiful for
heroes proved in
liberating strife,"*



PVT Robbie Mariano

*"who more than
self their country
loved and mercy
more than
life...."*



*"America, America,
God shed
His grace on thee."*

America, the Beautiful

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1